

Traffic Safety News and Facts for Employers June 17, 2004

NETS FEATURES

News from the Department of State Police, Office of Highway Safety Planning

Please take a moment to review the attached link regarding a news release on - Think you Won't Be Caught Driving Drunk? Think Again. Drunk Drive Ad Campaign Begins Monday, June 21, 2004.

http://www.michigan.gov/msp/0,1607,7-123-1586_1710-95672--,00.html

Fleet Safety Management Training Free in Michigan

The Michigan Center for Truck Safety (MCTS) provides safety management training for free to Michigan companies that use trucks, whether you have one truck or an entire fleet. MCTS is funded through registration fees on heavy vehicles, so we offer most of our programs to trucking companies at no charge.

The center has certified directors of safety from the National Association of Transportation Management Institute who can come to your site and help put a safety management plan in place, review your record keeping for compliance requirements and, if needed, assist you implementing a drug and alcohol testing program. The training is available to any company operating commercial motor vehicles, as defined in Michigan, and not just those requiring a CDL.

For more information, check out the Center's program at www.truckingsafety.org, or call (800) 682-4682 in the Lower Peninsula and (800) 469-7364 IN THE Upper Peninsula.

Traverse City Steps Up to Smart Commuting

From June 7 to 11, anybody bicycling, walking, busing, or carpooling to work in Traverse City, Michigan earns a free hot breakfast and some cool conversation at a rotating site. It's all part of "Smart Commute Week," the 10th annual event meant to coax people away from solo auto commutes and toward other, more sustainable options. The event is a relaxed and inclusive way to deal with an increasingly tense and divisive topic in Traverse City and across the nation: How best to deal with traffic congestion. Read the full article at

<http://www.mlui.org/transportation/fullarticle.asp?fileid=16706>

Latest Traffic Safety News

Rental Car Tracking Device Legal

As reported in the New Haven Advocate, a Connecticut jury found that Acme Rent-a-Car's in-car tracking device designed to catch speeding customers does not invade their clients' privacy. The global positioning device tracks customers' locations and driving habits, while only recording if a driver exceeds the speed limit for more than two minutes. Quickly becoming an important issue, a California assemblywoman introduced a bill mandating rental car agencies to tell customers when making a reservation whether the car has "electric surveillance technology" and what it's used for. To view the entire article visit <http://newhavenadvocate.com/gbase/News/content?oid=oid:68089>

High Healthcare Costs Biggest Threat to Bottom Line

Business executives have identified double-digit increases in health insurance costs as the biggest threat to their bottom line. For example, the Ford Motor Company spent \$30B in 2002 to insure 560,000 workers and in 2003 that figure jumped \$2B. The jump in premiums adds nearly \$1,000 to the cost of every Ford vehicle produced in the U.S. The increased costs are leading to the new trend of "consumer-directed health care" where employees are given a large deductible or money to buy their own plan.

Telematics: Attracting or Distracting Customers?

Telematics, or sophisticated in-vehicle technology that provides mobile communication and automated vehicle control are likely to open new opportunities within the automotive industry. GM and other carmakers are exploring new technology that will allow automobiles to communicate directly with carmakers to perform system checks, incorporate security products and download software patches to keep vehicles running as they should, even if drivers do not pay attention to warning indicators. Meanwhile, car rental companies are following suit and are equipping their vehicles with navigational systems to attract consumers. Yet critics are asking tough questions about driver distraction and liability should telematics fail to work properly. Learn more at

http://cnniw.yellowbrix.com/pages/cnnmoney/Story.nsp?story_id=51172206&ID=cnnmoney&scategory=Business+and+Finance

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A53286-2004May24.html>

http://www.businessweek.com/technology/content/may2004/tc20040527_0707_tc_169.htm

<http://www.eweek.com/article2/0,1759,1607705,00.asp>

Truck Telematics Allow 'Virtual' Presence

In-vehicle telematics with wireless telemetry tracks allows fleet management to have a "virtual" presence in every vehicle by allowing them to track vehicle location, performance, maintenance problems, and security. This technology can indicate impending problems that need to be fixed before a breakdown. Telematics can also monitor driver behavior recording braking, rapid speed changes, and engine rpm. Find more information at http://www.truckinginfo.com/news/news-detail.asp?news_id=51961&news_category_id=13

Internet and Cars: Another Distraction?

In a move to improve customer service and brand loyalty, auto manufacturers around the world are introducing new forms of technology into their vehicles. As of late there have been reports to integrate "Internet telematics" into vehicles, which will allow passengers to exchange e-mail information, transfer completed trouble tickets, and even download movies to entertain restless children. In-car computers will also be able to detect drowsy driving and notify authorities when an airbag has been deployed. Some, however, believe that the best way to keep drivers safe is to limit the use of computers in cars. Some doubt whether technology is reliable enough and fear an increase in dangerous driving as drivers manage complex systems on the move. For more information visit

<http://www.technewsworld.com/story/34187.html> and

<http://www.computeractive.co.uk/Features/1155755>

Appeals Court Rejects Negligence Claim Against Cell Phone Company

The Indiana Court of Appeals ruled that Cingular Wireless was not to blame for a crash involving a driver talking on a cell phone. The court rejected the claim that Cingular Wireless provided phones to people who were certain to use them while driving. In its ruling the court said that a cellular phone does not cause a crash. Rather, it is the driver's inattention while using the phone that may cause a crash. Several states have enacted laws either prohibiting or limiting the use of cell phones while

driving. New York, New Jersey and Washington, D.C., have banned it. The complete article can be found at <http://www.detnews.com/2004/autosinsider/0406/06/autos-174202.htm>

Tire Storage Management Controls Fleet Shop Costs

Stored tires break down for a variety of reasons and to protect the bottom line proper storage environment and proper management are important. Static electricity can dry out tires and petroleum products can soften tire rubber and create flat spots. Ozone and UV rays from sunlight can also create significant damage. Protect unused tires by storing them in a cool, dry area away from electrical motors and chemicals, and move them quarterly. Maintenance software tracking tires can also help. For additional information view <http://www.heavydutytrucking.com/2004/04/110a0404.asp>

California Town Blocks Commuters

As traffic on large interstates and highways continues to grow, many commuters take short cuts on neighboring city streets. However, one town is looking to shut down these short cuts. The residents of Pleasanton, California are throwing up roadblocks to stop commuters from "cutting through" their neighborhood including lights that meter the number of cars on the road and signals that favor locals. There is even talk of fast-pass lanes for residents only. The issue is sure to be an important factor in the upcoming November election, where three of five council seats are up for grabs. The article can be found at <http://sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2004/06/07/BAGL471TIK1.DTL>

Beware of Tired Travelers

The National Sleep Foundation (NSF) is warning vacationers to drive alert and be aware of drowsy drivers. According to NSF polls, some 100 million drivers say they have driven drowsy in the past year, and about one out of five of these drivers say they have actually fallen asleep at the wheel. The Foundation reports that drivers tend to fall asleep more on high-speed, long, straight, boring, and rural highways. To protect drivers, NSF encourages travelers not to get behind the wheel if feeling sleepy, plan ahead, and get a good night's sleep before the trip. For more information on planning a summer drive, visit <http://www.sleepfoundation.org/PressArchives/planningasummerdrive.cfm>

Can Driving Make You Fat?

A study in the Atlanta Journal-Constitution found a strong link between time spent driving and obesity among its 10,550 Atlanta resident participants. Where people lived also played role. For example, people who live in compact communities can walk to stores and restaurants are less likely to be obese in comparison to those who live in more sprawling areas. According to the study, every half hour spent in a car translates into a 3 percent greater chance of being obese. View the full article at <http://www.fleet-central.com/af/newspick.cfm?rank=4629>

Study Unravels Traffic Jam Mysteries

Most of us hate traffic jams, but believe it or not according to an article in the Sacramento Bee, civil engineer, Michael Cassidy, of the University of California, Berkley seeks them out. As part of an ongoing study on traffic jams and tailgating, Cassidy is trying to determine what causes "breakdown" traffic, which occurs when traffic flow stops for no apparent reason, and perhaps more importantly how it can be prevented. According to Cassidy, one of the culprits behind "spontaneous congestion" is how drivers initially react and behave at the onset of traffic. For more information about the study, read the entire article at <http://www.sacbee.com/content/opinion/story/9558584p-10482186c.html>

Radio Targets Traffic Jams

According to an article in the Charlotte Observer, Clear Channel Radio is tailoring its rush-hour traffic reports to areas where the majority of its listeners live. Through market surveys and research, the

company knows that a majority of listeners to its WKKT FM ("Kat" 96.9) are concentrated in certain ZIP codes or suburbs. Reports of tie-ups or crashes affecting commutes from those areas are being prioritized on traffic reports. The program has been operating in Charlotte for the past two weeks and is anticipated to spread to other Clear Channel stations. There are also plans to hire a carrier that will make traffic reports available via text message cell phones, pagers or wireless devices like BlackBerrys.

Roadcheck 2004 Starts June 8th

The 17th annual International Roadcheck took place throughout the United States, Canada, and Mexico during 72 continuous hours from June 8th-10th. Approximately 10,000 Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance (CVSA) certified truck and bus safety inspectors will be on the job at inspection sites along the highways. Roving patrols will inspect commercial vehicles traveling on other highways. This inspection program focuses on the continuous and combined efforts of law enforcement and the truck and bus industries to save lives on North America's highways. Find more information visit <http://www.cvsa.org/programs/04roadcheck2004.html>

News from USDOT

NHTSA Warns of Van Roll-over Dangers

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) issued a third public advisory about the potential dangers of driving and riding in 15-passenger vans. New NHTSA research shows that the risk of a rollover in a 15-passenger van increases dramatically at speeds over 50 mph and on curved roads. NHTSA also released new test results that show electronic stability control may improve driver handling of the vans under certain conditions. General Motors began offering stability control as a standard feature on its GMC Express and Chevy Savana vans this year. For more information visit the advisory at

<http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/cars/problems/studies/15PassVans/15PassCustomerAdvisory.htm>
and for more information visit <http://www.detnews.com/2004/autosinsider/0406/02/c01-171030.htm>

FMCSA Posts New Rules for Driver Training

Beginning July 20, employers of commercial vehicle drivers operating in interstate commerce must make sure entry-level drivers receive training covering following 4-areas, according to the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA). These areas include driver qualification requirements, hours of service, driver wellness, and Whistleblower protection. Drivers must be given a certificate or diploma certifying that mandated training was received and employers must have a copy of the certificate in the driver's personnel or qualification file. For additional information visit

http://www.truckinginfo.com/news/news-detail.asp?news_id=51961&news_category_id=3

NHTSA Proposes Changes to National Driver Register

NHTSA recently announced plans to amend the National Driver Register (NDR) by implementing changes that have been mandated by the Motor Carrier Safety Improvement Act of 1999 (MCSIA). The proposal would target the high-risk CDL drivers that sometimes obtain a second (non-CDL) license from a state other than the driver's state of residence, thereby using the second license to spread the bad driving record over two (or more) states. The MCSIA would require states to verify an individual's driving record through info checks of both the NDR and the Commercial Driver's License Information System (CDLIS) before issuing/renewing a license. View the proposal in the Federal Register at http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/getdoc.cgi?dbname=2004_register&docid=fr31mr04-33

FMCSA to Change Some SafeStat Procedures

FMCSA plans to restrict access to some data in the SafeStat system in response to a DOT report that found "material weaknesses in the SafeStat data." SafeStat is an automated, data-driven analysis system designed to measure the relative safety of carriers. SafeStat includes information on federal and state collisions, inspections, compliance reviews, and enforcement. FMCSA felt it was necessary to remove score data since third parties use the information to determine reliability and risk level.

Federal Highway Administrator Calls For More Funding

Federal Highway Administrator Mary Peters looking to boost highway safety called on Congress to pass a six-year bill with "responsible funding levels" at a meeting of the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials. While Peters acknowledged that work on congestion relief and environment relief are going well, highway safety is still a concern with highway fatalities up 10 percent. Peters called on uniform seat-belt laws across the nation, meaning drivers can be ticketed for not being buckled up and don't have to be stopped for some other violation first. She also mentioned drowsy driving and said: "Driving while you're severely fatigued is just as bad as driving when you're severely impaired." DOT is about to launch a campaign against drowsy driving. To view remarks visit <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/pressroom/re030226.htm>

NHTSA Advocates Data Recorder Standards

In a recent proposal by NHTSA, researchers advocated for data recorders to collect a standard set of data to help crash investigators. By September 2008, the agency wants recorders to collect up to 42 specific data elements, including the time it takes for air bags to deploy. Meanwhile automakers continue to add data recorders to vehicles. NHTSA estimates that between 65 to 90 percent of all 2004 vehicles will have some form of recording ability. General Motors Corp. began installing recorders in 1994, while Ford Motor Co. began installing them in 2001. View the proposal at <http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/nhtsa/announce/press/pressdisplay.cfm?year=2004&filename=pr27-04.html>

Rural Americans are High Risk for Crash

According to a report released by NHTSA, rural Americans face greater risk of being injured or killed in a traffic crash than those who live and commute in urban areas. The report found that while only 21 percent of the population lives in rural areas, rural traffic crashes accounted for 60 percent of the total fatalities on U.S. roadways. Prominent factors contributing to the high rural crash and fatality rates include: alcohol involvement, high-speed crashes, low safety belt use, vehicle rollovers, and ejections. View the full report at <http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/airbags/BUASBRuralWeb/images/SBs&Rrll%20Comms.pdf>

NHTSA Plans to Reduce Truck Stopping Distance by 30 Percent

NHTSA currently tests truck brakes at 60 mph speeds, but is considering an increase by the year 2007. At the present time, forty-two states have truck speeds over 60, and 9 states allow truck speeds of 75 mph and, poor quality off-shore replacement brake linings now account for 10-12% of aftermarket volume. Front-axle air disc brakes are expected to best meet the needs of safer NHTSA truck stopping standards. The industry, however, is encouraging a delay because of high costs already expected for model year 2007 EPA diesel emissions compliance. For more information visit <http://www.todaystrucking.com/displayarticle.cfm?ID=3222> and <http://www.heavydutytrucking.com/2004/04/076a0404.asp>

OSHA Bulletin Focuses on Small Tire Repair

The Occupational Health and Safety Administration (OSHA) published a new Safety and Health Bulletin entitled "Hazards while Servicing Light Truck, Automobile, and Other Small Tires." The purpose of this bulletin is to alert service stations and other tire repair shops of the hazards associated with the repair or service of light truck, automobile, and other small tires as well as to encourage employers to establish proper service and repair procedures, provide training and enforce them. To view the Bulletin visit <http://www.osha.gov/dts/shib/shib042904.html>

US DOT, NASCAR Promote Seat Belts and Impaired Driving Laws

The U.S. Department of Transportation (US DOT) and NASCAR are joining together to educate race fans about safety belt use and impaired driving laws. According to the US DOT, adult males younger than 34 are especially at risk of being involved in a motor vehicle crash. More than 6,400 males in that age group are killed each year, and 72 percent of them are not wearing seat belts. View the announcement at <http://www.dot.gov/affairs/nhtsa2304.htm>

International Traffic Safety News:

Firms Fail to Check on Illegal Driving

In a new survey by New Zealand fleet and vehicle management specialist Lease Plan, almost three quarters of companies are unaware whether they have procedures in place to check whether drivers using their own cars on business are insured or fit for driving. Company chiefs could find themselves in court facing manslaughter charges should one of their drivers be involved in a crash that causes a death. For more information visit http://www.workplacelaw.net/display.php?resource_id=4594

Traffic Crashes Cost South Africa 13 Billion Rand a Year

South Africa's Department of Transport reports that over 500,000 traffic crashes occur annually on the country's roads and of these 80 percent were a result of driver-related offenses. These crashes were estimated to cost the government in excess of R13 billion a year and, at the same time, only 28 percent of issued fines were collected. The State loses about R750 million a year in uncollected fines. Read the full article at <http://www.bday.co.za/bday/content/direct/1,3523,1634528-6078-0,00.html>

Parking Causes Most Common Fleet Damage

Based on a survey of thousands of vehicles by European company Arval PHH, fleets are being urged to teach their drivers how to park their vehicles properly after new research revealed bumper damage tops the list of the most common type of car damage. The survey cited that front bumper damage could be caused by maneuvering into tight parking spaces and found the average cost to be £200. For more information visit

http://icnewcastle.icnetwork.co.uk/1700icmotors/0100news/tm_objectid=14283745&method=full&siteid=50081&headline=parking-a-costly-move-name_page.html

Employees Driving Vehicles with Incorrect Tire Pressure

A Michelin study found that most European company motorists are driving cars and vans with incorrect tire pressures. It found that a staggering 99.9% of drivers are adding more than £14 to the cost of each new tire for their vehicles by having to have them replaced prematurely. The company claims that premature replacement costs UK companies an average £34 per year per car.

Aggression Key to Relieving Tension in Bogotá Streets

Aggressive driving can ease traffic congestion, according to researchers who have created a computer model of the mean streets of Colombia's capital Bogotá. The study shows how a city's traffic build-up

road-wise workforce



is influenced by the characteristic driving style of its motorists. Traffic experts had previously been puzzled as to how Bogotá, with 7 million inhabitants and more than a million private cars, is so jam-free. According to the study, the answer now seems that Bogotáns are simply more aggressive than their counterparts in London, New York and other huge metropolises. To view the full study visit http://arxiv.org/PS_cache/cond-mat/pdf/0406/0406065.pdf



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